

*Office Memorandum* • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Assistant Director for Operations

DATE: 19 April 1948

FROM : Chief, FDB, OO

SUBJECT: Foreign Language Press

1. Yesterday, Rear Admiral Zacharias, USN (Retired), an officer of more than 20 years service in naval intelligence, broadcast a 15-minute radio discourse covering national intelligence in general and the recent failure of U S intelligence in the Bogota, Columbia incident in particular. His remarks and deductions were so accurate and pertinent to the situation now existing in CIA, that I am moved to again suggest that strong attempts be resumed on a high level to get approval from the necessary IAC agencies for a more complete exploitation of foreign language press, periodicals and official documents originating in foreign countries.

2. Admiral Zacharias made the statement, which is well-known to all experienced intelligence personnel, that overt sources produce 99% of all the worthwhile intelligence possible to acquire in a foreign country with covert sources producing only the remaining 1%. He stated categorically, that the failure at Bogota was due to improper evaluation of intelligence material which was easily available from overt sources. I am not in a position to state definitely whether the failure was due to the evaluators not having the raw intelligence which should have been available to them or whether they failed to properly evaluate the intelligence that was in their possession for use.

3. The Admiral further made it very clear that no nation, iron curtain or not, is able to keep out of overt sources the kind of information that is so much desired by other nations. He stated that by far the best sources of overt information are the press, periodicals, government publications, books and other printed material in general plus the radio. In other words, the activities encompassed in the Charter and Functions of the Office of Operations are those best designed to obtain the 99% of intelligence which is always available in any country at any time.

4. I desire at this time to again call your attention to the failure of the paper known as NSC No. 8 to receive approval by ICAPS. It is perfectly obvious, if one admits the truth of the statements made by Admiral Zacharias, that the failure to approve NSC No. 8 dealt a severe blow to the ability of CIA to procure the necessary raw intelligence for use of those charged with intelligence evaluation in order that they may properly perform their assigned function. The above-mentioned paper, if approved, would have authorized the Foreign Documents Branch of the Office of Operations to summarize and abstract the foreign language press. To properly evaluate raw intelli-

gence or highly important current events, or to forecast future trends or incidents in foreign countries, a great mass of background material must first be assembled for the use of the evaluators. Single events cannot be evaluated nor can future trends be forecast from single unrelated incidents. These must all be viewed against the background screen of a complete picture built up of thousands of related pieces of information assembled over a long period. This can only be accomplished by a large number of individuals capable of reading and understanding the many foreign languages covered and by their abstracting or summarizing the intelligence contained in the foreign press on a continuous day-to-day basis. This surveillance cannot be successfully done in a haphazard, sporadic manner. The coverage must be complete and continuous so that nothing is overlooked. The occasional highly significant fact or statement buried in the body of a relatively unimportant speech or routine government report is thus made available. The requisite background picture by which the evaluator is able to properly interpret current or future events or trends is built up of many hundreds of such apparently minor items which, when properly assembled, contain the basic facts required. The statement was made by those opposed to NSC No. 8 that proper exploitation can now be done in the various embassies, for instance: by the military and naval attaches assigned there, or later perhaps, by the individual assigned to the proper nationality or area desk in the appropriate agency here in Washington. It is obvious that neither of these statements can be true, for in many instances the attache is not qualified in the language of the country to which he is assigned, or at least not sufficiently so, to thoroughly understand all of the scientific, technical and economic disclosures covered in the various printed media, and further, the volume of printed material is far too great in any country to permit the limited intelligence personnel assigned there by this country, or the desk official here, to give complete and continuous coverage. It was made perfectly clear by this branch in its defense of the proposed NSC No. 8 that our desires in the matter were not to take from any agency the exploitation of foreign language material which they might now be doing, but only to give further more complete and more continuous coverage than they were able to do with their limited means, furnishing them with the end-products pertinent to their needs.

5. I am more convinced than ever that this matter is of sufficient importance that Admiral Hillenkoetter should be urged to take up the matter directly with the members of the National Security Council. I believe the time is propitious for such a move, as the recent embarrassment to our Government with its consequent loss of prestige is now uppermost in the minds of everyone connected with the best interests of our country. I would be more than glad to furnish any further details on this subject which you consider to

be of value in furthering your attempts to get approval for the complete exploitation of the foreign language press by Foreign Documents Branch.



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